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STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL COOPERATION

Comments on the recommendations and decisions contained in the report of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination on its fifteenth session, work done and additional action required for implementation

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

At its fifteenth session the Working Group made nine recommendations to the Statistical Commission and ten decisions, all related to strengthening international statistical cooperation and improving the functioning of the international statistical system (see E/CN.3/1993/21). The present report contains the comments of the Secretariat on those recommendations and decisions, and a summary of the work done and additional action required to implement each one. Additional information relating to decision 2, in which the Secretariat was requested to develop several options on restructuring its work programme, is contained in document E/CN.3/1993/CRP.1.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The present report provides the Secretariat's comments on each of the recommendations and decisions contained in the report of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination on its fifteenth session (E/CN.3/1993/21). These comments include: (a) indications of work or other action already under way, initiated or planned by the Secretariat, by other bodies in the United Nations system and in various inter-agency forums, in response to or relevant to the recommendations and decisions of the Working Group; (b) indications of any potential financial implications, which will be formally assessed during the Commission's session; and (c) assessment and suggestions of the Statistical Division, for each recommendation and decision, regarding (i) problems perceived and possible solutions, alternatives and trade-offs, (ii) appropriate time frames, and (iii) conditions that need to be met before action can be taken.

2. The Secretary-General has initiated a process of major restructuring of the Secretariat in the economic and social sectors, which is likely to have important implications for the work of the Organization in the field of statistics, including a number of the recommendations and decisions discussed in this report. Relevant current information on the results of this restructuring process will be made available to the Commission at the time of the Commission session.

3. The Commission is invited to take account of the information provided in this report when considering the recommendations and decisions of the Working Group.

I. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WORKING GROUP: TEXT, COMMENTS AND ACTIONS

Recommendation 1

4. The Statistical Commission should consider requesting the Economic and Social Council to change the cycle of Commission sessions so that, depending on needs, annual meetings of 8 half days spread over 5 calendar days could be held instead of a single session of 8 full days every second year.

5. In relation to recommendation 1, an indication will be provided of the capacity of the Secretariat, on the strength of currently available resources, to provide the necessary technical and substantive support and documentation for the proposed schedule of sessions. Cost implications, for providing meeting support services, translation, interpretation and travel of representatives and observers from the regional commissions, will be made available to the Commission. The Economic and Social Council has been firm in its insistence that commissions should, in general, meet every second year.

Recommendation 2

6. The Commission should decide, with immediate effect:

(a) To nominate officers for the following session at the end of a current session, with formal election at the beginning of the following session, to re-elect the same persons a number of times as officers and to provide for the officers to meet informally;

(b) To request the Secretariat to give a copy of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council to new officers and to consider drafting a popular version of the rules incorporating practical hints;

(c) To request the Statistical Division to invite chairpersons of regional conferences of chief statisticians to participate in the sessions;

(d) To request participants to present their reports to the Commission as documents or background papers and not as lengthy oral statements;

(e) To request the Secretariat to ensure that specific agenda items are well-prepared and well-documented through discussion and reports of the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities and/or the Working Group.

7. In relation to recommendation 2 (a), the objective of this recommendation is to allow the officers of a future session of the Commission to know of their nomination well in advance of the future session, so that they may prepare for their role, and in particular may have the opportunity to participate in the Working Group session(s) prior to the Commission session for which they will serve as officers (see para. 14 below). This would contribute to their preparations and provide increased continuity, and thus greatly benefit the work of the Commission and Working Group. To assist in this, the Secretariat, during each session of the Commission, is willing to provide available information on the membership of the Commission for the next session. However, the member countries and their representatives for the next session would not be known at that time for those member countries of the Commission whose terms expire before the next session of the Commission. Additionally, for those member countries whose terms continue beyond the next session, it would not necessarily be clear who their representatives would be for the next session. Consequently, the Commission, in following this recommendation, would be acting on incomplete information about its composition for the next session. This would be the case whether the Commission met annually or every other year, although it would not be as serious in the case of annual meetings. The situation could be improved if the elections in the Economic and Social Council for membership of the Statistical Commission were brought forward so that future membership could be known earlier. The Secretariat is prepared to provide a meeting room, given reasonable notice, for officers to meet informally immediately before, during and after sessions of the Commission and the Working Group. Similarly, a meeting room could be provided in between sessions of the Commission and the

Working Group. However, other services, such as interpretation, would not be available for such purposes, and the United Nations would not be responsible for any travel or subsistence costs of participants in connection with such meetings, over and above the normal costs covered for participation at Commission sessions, unless explicit approval for the cost of such services and expenses were contained in the approved United Nations programme budget.

8. In relation to recommendation 2 (b), as requested, the secretariat will provide copies of the rules of procedure to new officers when they are nominated under recommendation 2 (a), as well as to any additional new officers when they are elected at the beginning of a Commission session. The Statistical Division will consult with relevant departments of the Secretariat on the possibility of preparing a simplified version of the rules of procedure, incorporating practical hints. However, further clarification of the desired content of such a version is needed by the Secretariat before it can proceed.

9. In relation to recommendation 2 (c), the Statistical Division invited the chairpersons of the regional conferences of chief statisticians to participate in the present session, as it had done for previous sessions. Arrangements will be made with the regional commissions to keep the Statistical Division informed of the names of the Chairmen of the regional conferences.

10. In relation to recommendation 2 (d), as part of the preparations for each session of the Commission, the Statistical Division will remind all participants about the Commission's recommendation on this question, particularly when initially notifying participants of session dates and when requesting documentation in advance of a session. The Secretariat is prepared to provide participants with the mailing list of all expected participants in advance of the Commission session, so that participants may distribute copies of any material such as reports, documents or publications that they would like to make available before the meeting. The Secretariat can also provide limited facilities during the session for copying and distributing background information requested by participants and written texts. Official translation by the Secretariat is available only when provision is made in advance as part of the documentation plan for the session. However, in the past many countries and organizations have made technical documents available in two or more official languages of the Organization during Commission sessions. The Statistical Division will continue to facilitate the wide distribution of such materials, which has long been recognized as a valuable service by Commission participants. The Commission may wish to note that, although reports and statements become part of the official record only through oral intervention or formal distribution as official documents in all languages, none the less the oral presentation of lengthy, detailed, technical or descriptive materials in the field of statistics may often be difficult for the listener to grasp, especially via simultaneous interpretation.

11. In relation to recommendation 2 (e), preparation for certain agenda items of the present and previous sessions of the Commission has been facilitated by thorough discussion by and reports of the Subcommittee on Statistical

Activities of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) and the Working Group. Most of these reports have been presented as reports of the Secretary-General, and have contained or drawn extensively on materials provided by various members of the Subcommittee that have been discussed by the Subcommittee and the Working Group and reflect their decisions. Consultations will be held with the Subcommittee to determine how this process can be more effectively used and more clearly focused on Statistical Commission needs, commencing with the reports for the twenty-eighth session of the Commission.

Recommendation 3

12. The Statistical Commission should decide with immediate effect:

(a) To recommend to the Economic and Social Council that the Working Group should hold two meetings a year, each of 2 days' duration;

(b) To determine the membership of the Working Group at the end of each session of the Commission and give preference to newly nominated officers for the next session;

(c) To request the Statistical Division to invite the chairpersons of the regional conferences of chief statisticians to participate in the meetings of the Working Group;

(d) To request the Working Group to prepare short reports of its meetings and to ensure that the meetings mainly result in specific documentation for the Commission.

13. In relation to recommendation 3 (a), see comments on recommendation 1 (para. 5 above).

14. In relation to recommendation 3 (b), the Commission has always determined the membership of the Working Group at the end of each session and has always followed the rules it established for determining the composition of the Working Group. These rules have been adjusted by the Commission to "ensure representation of both developed and developing countries and countries with different economic and statistical systems, bearing in mind that special attention should be given to ensuring representation of developing countries from among members of ECA, ECLAC, ESCAP AND ESCWA". 1/ To carry out this recommendation, the Statistical Commission could further modify the rules for the composition of the Working Group by adding to the rule quoted above the phrase "and to ensuring representation by newly nominated officers for the next session (of the Statistical Commission)". This additional element in determining the composition could lead to an increase in the size of the Working Group. The Working Group at its thirteenth session "considered it necessary to fix a maximum limit on the size of the Working Group. No agreement was reached on what the maximum size should be and the proposals that were made varied between 10 and 12 members" (see E/CN.3/1991/2, para. 89; see also comments on recommendation 2 (a), para. 7 above).

15. In relation to recommendation 3 (c), the Statistical Division can extend the invitations as recommended.

16. In relation to recommendation 3 (d), the reports of the Working Group sessions are issued as documents for consideration by the Statistical Commission. The Statistical Division, working with the Chairman of the Working Group and the Rapporteur, can help to focus the reports as necessary to better meet the needs of the Commission. The Secretariat, in preparing annotations for each agenda item of the Statistical Commission, can fully identify relevant parts of the report of the Working Group.

Recommendation 4

17. The Statistical Commission should decide with immediate effect:

(a) To request the Statistical Division and the agencies to place more emphasis on coordination matters;

(b) To request the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities to form ad hoc groups for special topics;

(c) To request the ACC Subcommittee to prepare specific documentation on appropriate issues for the Commission, through the Working Group;

(d) To request the ACC Subcommittee to ensure that reports of its meetings provided to the Commission should not be lengthy.

18. In relation to recommendation 4 (a), attention to coordination matters is given high priority in the Statistical Division and the agencies, although coordination can be given greater emphasis in working methods and greater use can be made of the existing coordination mechanisms, namely the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities, its various subsidiary bodies and other Working Groups that have been established for the purpose in particular subject areas.

19. In relation to recommendation 4 (b), see comments on recommendation 4 (a). The existing coordination bodies should be encouraged by the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities to be fully active in their fields. In addition, six task forces, established by the Working Group at its fifteenth session under decision 5 (see paras. 41 and 42 below), will be activated in 1992 and 1993. The Statistical Division will propose an agenda item for a review of coordinating mechanisms by the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities, to determine whether any additional standing or ad hoc mechanisms for special topics need to be established.

20. In relation to recommendation 4 (c), see comments on recommendations 2 (e) and 3 (d) (paras. 11 and 16 above).

21. In relation to recommendation 4 (d), reports of the meetings of the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities have, in recent years, been made

available to members of the Statistical Commission for information. They are not official documents on the agenda of the Statistical Commission. These reports serve a number of purposes and this has affected their length. At its twenty-sixth session, the Subcommittee decided, on an experimental basis, "... to prepare a report on the session that was more focused on issues, decisions and agreements, which as a consequence was expected to be briefer than the reports on previous sessions which had attempted to more fully cover the wide range of views that were expressed during discussions of each agenda item" (see ACC/1992/16, para. 4). The new style of report is expected to be consistent with the Working Group recommendation.

Recommendation 5

22. The Commission should request the Statistical Division:

(a) To find ways to strengthen its role in serving the purposes and work of the Commission;

(b) To place more emphasis on coordination matters.

23. In relation to recommendation 5, specific proposals for strengthening the role of the Statistical Division in serving the purposes and work of the Commission, and for placing more emphasis on coordination, are included in the work programme proposals of the Statistical Division for 1994-1995 (see E/CN.3/1993/CRP.1).

Recommendation 6

24. The Commission should request the Statistical Division, in cooperation with the statistical divisions of the regional commissions and other relevant agencies, to set up a system for monitoring adherence to adopted United Nations classifications, provide a description of the present situation on the adoption of classifications in the member countries and their relationship to adopted United Nations classifications, and submit a progress report to the Commission at its twenty-eighth session.

25. In relation to recommendation 6, the Statistical Division will propose the inclusion of this item on the agenda of the twenty-seventh session of the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities, to be held in June 1993. A report on the adoption by countries of the International Standard Industrial Classification, revision 3 (ISIC, Rev.3) and the Central Product Classification (CPC) is before the Commission at its present session (E/CN.3/1993/7). Limited information on the adoption of the Standard International Trade Classification, revision 3 (SITC, Rev.3) is also before the Commission at its present session (see E/CN.3/1993/15/Add.1).

Recommendation 7

26. The Commission, at its twenty-seventh session should consider the following as a possible special topic for discussion at its twenty-eighth session, in 1995: "Advantages and disadvantages of more flexible standards (classifications and other elements), concentrating in the first instance on classifications for economic activities and commodities (International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities, revision 3; the General Industrial Classification of Economic Activities within the European Communities, revised; and other classifications)".

27. In relation to recommendation 7, the Secretariat will include this matter as a proposed special topic on the preliminary draft agenda for the twenty-eighth session of the Statistical Commission, along with any other special topics which may have been proposed. The Statistical Division will be able to provide orally a proposed outline and contents for a report on the subject. The preliminary draft agenda is to be considered by the Commission at its present session and, following past practice, the Commission will select one or more special topics for its next session.

Recommendation 8

28. The Commission should request the Statistical Division and the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities to give continual attention to reducing duplication in collecting and processing data from member countries, and request a progress report for each session of the Commission, along the lines of chapter I of the inventory of statistical data collection activities (see E/CN.3/AC.1/1991/R.7); the report (and the inventory) should be reorganized along subject-matter lines.

29. In relation to recommendation 8, the Statistical Division, the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities and the Working Group keep this matter under review through the preparation and consideration of reports on data collection for virtually every session. Various reports have also been provided to the Commission at previous sessions. Considerable action has been taken by the various organizations to coordinate their data-collection activities. The revised version of the inventory of statistical data-collection activities (E/CN.3/AC.1/1991/R.7) is scheduled to be prepared during the first half of 1993 for the sixteenth session of the Working Group. It will be restructured along subject-matter lines as far as possible. The Secretariat will prepare a report on the coordination of statistical data collection for each session of the Commission along the lines of chapter I of the inventory and its revision by the Working Group.

Recommendation 9

30. The role of the Commission should be used to:

(a) Give authoritative advice on the allocation of statistical subjects to the agencies concerning statistical work, development/revision of standards and technical assistance;

(b) Give authoritative adv.ce on the detailed agreements between the agencies on cooperation regarding the actual work to be performed.

31. In relation to recommendation 9 (a), the issue here is the overall allocation of statistical responsibilities in the international system. Various reports will be available to the Commission to help it frame its advice in this context, including the reports on achievements and plans (restructured on a subject-matter basis) and eventually the descriptive integrated work programme of statistics called for under decision 8 (see para. 49 below). In addition, the Secretariat will provide to the Statistical Commission the proposals called for under the Working Group's decision 2 (see paras. 35 and 36 below) on how the Statistical Division might restructure its work programme, including the proposal that the Statistical Division consult with agencies on a possible realignment of some responsibilities among the international organizations. These proposals should provide a basis for the Commission to provide advice concerning allocation of subjects, standards and technical cooperation.

32. In relation to recommendation 9 (b), the Statistical Division is discussing with a number of agencies increased cooperation and possible realignment of some responsibilities in such areas as trade, industrial and migration statistics. If successful, these proposals and others to be made in the future will be reflected in work programme proposals of the Statistical Division and in written agreements, which will be made available to the Statistical Commission and the Working Group for their advice.

II. DECISIONS OF THE WORKING GROUP: TEXT, COMMENTS AND ACTIONS

Decision 1

33. "The Working Group decided that, for the 1993 session of the Statistical Commission, the Statistical Division should continue its informal practice of inviting chairpersons of regional conferences to attend Commission sessions."

34. In relation to decision 1: the Statistical Division will do this. See comment on recommendation 3 (c) (para. 15 above).

Decision 2

35. "The Working Group requested the Secretariat to develop proposals presenting several options to the Commission on how the Statistical Division might restructure its work programme to respond to these recommendations, including an indication of internal reallocations of resources that might be necessary."

36. In relation to decision 2: the draft proposals of the Statistical Division for the 1994-1995 work programme are before the Commission at its present session (E/CN.3/1993/CRP.1) and include certain proposals which are particularly relevant to this decision, as well as the implications of these

proposals for the possible restructuring of the Secretariat's work programme, and additional options the Commission may wish to consider.

Decision 3

37. "The Working Group established a drafting group, consisting of the representatives of Argentina, the United States of America, ESCAP, ECLAC and the World Bank, to prepare recommendations concerning the role of the regional statistical conferences and statistical divisions, which would be put before the Statistical Commission at its twenty-seventh session, with a view to the Commission making appropriate recommendations to the Economic and Social Council."

38. In relation to decision 3, the Statistical Division contacted the members of the drafting group to offer to provide any information/assistance they might need in preparing the recommendations that they had been requested to put before the Commission.

Decision 4

39. "The Working Group requested that the Statistical Division and the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities present inter-agency planning reports on a subject basis where feasible at the twenty-seventh session of the Commission."

40. In relation to decision 4, two documents that are compiled by the Statistical Division, based on information provided by members of the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities, have been restructured from an organization structure to a subject-matter structure for the twenty-seventh session of the Commission. They are "Plans of the international organizations in the area of statistics" (E/CN.3/1993/23) and "Overall review of the statistical work of the international organizations" (E/CN.3/1993/22). A third document, "Report on technical cooperation in statistics" (E/CN.3/1993/17), had been finalized earlier using the organization structure.

Decision 5

41. "The Working Group identified six subject-matter areas where a need for review was considered a priority. The Working Group noted that task force mechanisms already existed for two of the areas, established new task forces for the other four and, with the agreement of the agencies concerned, appointed conveners for each of the task forces as follows:

1. National accounts (already existing; convener: Inter-Secretariat Working Group on National Accounts (ISWGNA));

2. Industrial and construction statistics (convener: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD));

3. International trade statistics (already existing; covener: General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT));

4. Finance statistics (convener: International Monetary Fund (IMF));

5. Price statistics including the International Comparison Programme (ICP) (convener: Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat));

6. Environment statistics (convener: Statistical Division of the United Nations).

An additional area of review, a technical cooperation issue, was identified - poverty, social indicators and household surveys to obtain relevant information - but action on it was deferred to allow attention to be concentrated on the six areas identified above." (The terms of reference and method of work and reporting were also included in the decision but are not repeated here. See E/CN.3/1993/21, paras. 53-55.)

42. In relation to decision 5, information on the status of organization and work of the six task forces is provided below:

(a) National accounts (already existing; convener: ISWGNA). As indicated by the Working Group, this task force will not start work until ISWGNA completes work on revision of the System of National Accounts;

(b) Industrial and construction statistics (convener: OECD). The Statistical Division initiated with OECD and UNIDO discussions concerning work relationships prior to the Working Group meeting. Additional discussions have been held. OECD has indicated that it will take steps to initiate the work of this task force;

(c) International trade statistics (already existing; convener: GATT). The task force has continued work on improving the flow of trade statistics from countries to the Statistical Division; the preparation of estimates for non-reported data; and research into preparing adjustments for national data to improve international comparability of trade data. Several research documents have been prepared. The task force plans to meet in New York when its members are present for the twenty-seventh session of the Statistical Commission;

(d) Finance statistics (convener: IMF). A letter and questionnaire have been drafted by IMF covering balance of payments, money and banking, and government finance statistics. These will be sent to the organizations involved as a basis for deciding how to proceed with the task force activities;

(e) Price statistics including the ICP (convener: Eurostat). Eurostat has indicated that it will take steps to initiate the work of this task force;

(f) Environment statistics (convener: Statistical Division). As a step towards determining the problems and opportunities for expanded coordination and cooperation, in August 1992, the Statistical Division wrote to agencies involved in environment statistics enclosing a questionnaire on current activities and plans. A decision on how to proceed will be made when adequate information is received. A relationship needs to be worked out between the task force, the Intersecretariat Working Group on Environmental Data of the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities and the Intergovernment Working Group on Advancement of Environment Statistics.

Decision 6

43. "The Working Group requested the task forces established under paragraphs 50-55 above* to investigate ways to carry out the evaluations and carry them out as far as possible."

44. In relation to decision 6, this decision is to be implemented by each task force under its terms of reference. Each task force will be encouraged to develop a draft approach for each of its areas. Alternatively, the Statistical Division and the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities could develop a common draft approach to be considered by each of the task forces, on the understanding that the approaches actually adopted by the task forces might necessarily differ.

Decision 7

45. "The Working Group requested the task forces established under paragraphs 50-55 above* to address the question of publications in the course of their review of the particular subject areas. In particular the Working Group requested the task forces to consider the review undertaken by the Conference of European Statisticians, a/ and set up a similar review. The Working Group specified that this review should primarily concern publications in printed or similar form, but the relationship with machine-readable forms of dissemination should be taken into account. The Working Group considered that it would be in a position to consider the matter further when it had received the task force reports."

"a/ See CES/741, 9 April 1992; CES/747, 24 April 1992; and ECE/CES/40, paras. 43-49."

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* See para. 41 above.

46. In relation to decision 7, the alternative approaches available are similar to those for decision 6 (para. 30 above). In addition, evaluation studies have already been carried out for the publications of the Statistical Division and machine-readable databases in trade, national accounts, industry, transport and energy. The general statistical publications of the Statistical Division (Statistical Yearbook, Monthly Bulletin of Statistics and the Statistical Pocketbook) will provide information for some of the task forces and may be of interest to the Working Group. The various fields covered by the task forces cover only a portion of the total publications output of the Statistical Division. The Secretariat and the competent intergovernmental bodies have given very high priority in the current and previous biennium work programmes to planning and evaluation of the publications programme, and this priority is expected to be further emphasized in consideration of the 1994-1995 programme budget. Publication issues, including electronic dissemination and publications, are high on the Commission's list of concerns, as they are on the Organization's in general. Such issues can be addressed only partially in a sectoral task force. The Secretariat would welcome the above steps being further developed by the Commission, in order to establish a single mechanism to provide in-depth and comprehensive advice on the publications programme (including electronic publications).

Decision 8

47. "The Working Group requested the task forces established by its decision 5 (see paras. 50-55 above)* to carry out the two tasks described in paragraph 68 (a) and (b) above in their particular subject areas."

48. In relation to decision 8, paragraph 68 (a) and (b) of the report of the Working Group reads:

> "The Working Group considered the following recommendations of the independent Review Group on gaps and weaknesses in the international statistical system:
>
> "(a) On the basis of the (descriptive) integrated work programme of statistics and related documentation an effort should be made to identify weaknesses, gaps and imbalances in the current programme. In such a process budgetary aspects should be taken into account;
>
> (b) Beside the continuation of efforts to reduce the time lag between the observation period and the moment of dissemination of structural and detailed statistics, for some statistical subjects consider the possibility of collecting and disseminating more recent statistical information (main indicators)."

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* See para. 41 above.

49. In relation to decision 8, substantial progress on its first request will be achieved when a (descriptive) integrated work programme of statistics and related documentation is prepared. The Working Group established the development of such a work programme as a long-term goal (see E/CN.3/1993/21, para. 46). Up-to-date documentation on the global statistical system will be maintained and, in particular, two outputs to revise the Directory of International Statistics are included in the proposed work programme of the Statistical Division for the 1994/1995 biennium. In the shorter term, with the restructuring by subject matter of several reports to the Statistical Commission (see decision 4 and comments, paras. 40-41 above), an initial effort at identifying weaknesses, gaps and imbalances can be made.

50. In relation to decision 8, action on its second request is under way in the Statistical Division. In addition, the Statistical Division will propose to the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities that it consider the question at its twenty-seventh session in 1993. The Statistical Division and the agencies are making every effort to publish or otherwise make statistics available with minimum delay. As part of the review of its resource allocations, the Statistical Division has considered possible changes in the mix of data collected and disseminated, with the aim of issuing statistics on a more timely basis. Already steps have been taken to improve the timeliness of issuing the international trade statistics publication Commodity Trade Statistics, Series D. The Commission may wish to note that a wide range of current statistics is already provided in the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics. National statistical services update these series monthly, quarterly or annually, according to periodicity in the Bulletin and as feasible. Increasingly these updates are provided to the Statistical Division by facsimile. For high priority tables, new data are entered into the Bulletin tables with a delay of no more than a week, and are issued and disseminated in printed form (by airmail to paid subscribers) no more than one month after the end of the month in which they are received. The draft work programme for 1994-1995 calls for computerization of this process, so that data can be received and disseminated in electronic format. This will eliminate shipping delays and further shorten the time-span between data issuance by national statistical services in countries and availability to international users in a single source.

Decision 9

51. "The Working Group decided to bring its concerns relating to technical cooperation again to the attention of the Statistical Commission."

52. In relation to decision 9, the report of the Working Group will be before the Commission at its present session and the Commission's attention will be drawn to the relevant paragraphs of the report, in which these concerns are expressed, during consideration of the agenda item on technical cooperation.

Decision 10

53. "The Working Group endorsed the ideas set out in the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/AC.1/1991/R.3/Add.1) concerning the Statistical Division's plans for continuing to collect, compile and disseminate nationally reported data, and to extend its adjustment and estimation work to all fields in its responsibility as far as possible in order to meet the wide range of user needs. The Working Group decided that these plans should be brought to the attention of the specialized agencies for their consideration."

54. In relation to decision 10, the Statistical Division, in cooperation with the agencies, and the task forces established by the Working Group, is working on these matters. The Statistical Division has written to bring this decision to the attention of the specialized agencies, as a follow-up to the previous notification and discussion of this initiative at the twenty-fifth session of the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities.

III. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

55. The Commission may wish to take the information in this document into account when considering the recommendations and decisions of the Working Group as set out in the report of the Working Group on its fifteenth session (E/CN.3/1993/21).

Notes

1/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1991, Supplement No. 5 (E/1991/25 and Corr.1), para. 220.